Summary of Dissertation Recitals
A Survey of Respighi's Influences, French Cyclical Works, and Britten's Violin Concerto

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
(Music: Performance)
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Dedicated to all who have guided me on my musical journey, especially

Jesus Christ the King, my family, and my teachers

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My musical journey began in the years that I cannot fully remember—was I three or four years old when I picked up my toy violin? The road since then has presented many obstacles and setbacks but also so much joy and reward. Without the love and support of God, my family and teachers I would not be where I am today completing my doctorate degree. I would like to give special thanks to:

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Professor Yehonatan Berick for inspiring me to express music from the heart and soul

Beverly Beheim, my childhood teacher who has taught and given me so much

My mother and father for teaching me not to give up

Nori, my brother, who made me tough

Nathaniel for his endless support

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ABSTRACT

In lieu of a written dissertation, three violin recitals were presented. The first recital, *Respighi and his Influences*, took place on November 5, 2019, 8:00 pm at the Walgreen Drama Center in Stamps Auditorium and involved collaborations with Nathaniel Pierce on baroque cello, Tan Benatar on classical guitar, John Etsell and Bernard Tan on piano, and Professor Joseph Gascho on harpsichord. The program included Ciaccona in C Major by Antonio Bertali, Cantabile by Niccolò Paganini, *Sonatensatz* ("Scherzo in C Minor" from F.A.E. Sonata) by Johannes Brahms, and Violin Sonatas by Claude Debussy and Ottorino Respighi.

The second recital, *Cyclic, French, Transformation*, took place on January 24, 2020, 8:00 pm at the Walgreen Drama Center in Stamps Auditorium. Collaborators for this program included Nathaniel Pierce on baroque cello, John Etsell and Ji-Hyang Gwak on piano, and Professor Joseph Gascho on harpsichord. Works performed here were Violin Sonatas by Georg Muffat, Camille Saint-Saëns, Maurice Ravel, and Thème et variations by Olivier Messiaen.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic I was not able to perform my third and final dissertation recital as scheduled on April 6, 2020. Therefore in lieu of it a recording of my performance of the Britten Violin Concerto with the University Symphony Orchestra conducted by Professor Kenneth Kiesler was submitted.

First Dissertation Recital
Respighi and his Influences
Christine Harada Li, Violin

Nathaniel Pierce, Baroque Cello
Tal Benatar, Classical Guitar
John Etsell & Bernard Tan, Piano
Joseph Gascho, Harpsichord

Tuesday, November 5, 2019
Walgreen Drama Center, Stamps Auditorium
8:00 PM

Ciaccona in C Major — Antonio Bertali (1605–1669)

Nathaniel Pierce, baroque cello
Tal Benatar, classical guitar
Joseph Gascho, harpsichord

Cantabile — Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840)

John Etsell, piano

Sonatensatz ("Scherzo in C Minor" from ***F.A.E. Sonata)*** — Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

John Etsell, piano

Violin Sonata — Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

John Etsell, piano

Intermission

Violin Sonata in B Minor — Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936)

Moderato
Andante espressivo
Passacaglia: Allegro moderato ma energico

Bernard Tan, piano

Program Notes
Respighi and His Influences

The overarching theme of this program showcases a number of composers and types of music that may have influenced Ottorino Respighi's compositions. Respighi is most known for his trilogy of orchestral tone poems (Fountains of Rome, Pines of Rome, Roman Festivals), and is often referred to as an Italian impressionist. His music embodies many different musical styles and this conveys unique individualistic sonorities.

Respighi began studying the violin, piano, and composition as a child. His composition teacher was a musicologist who inspired Respighi's lifelong interest in baroque music. Later, during his studies in Bologna, he was highly influenced by a teacher (Giuseppe Martucci) who was the leading composer of non-operatic music in Italy. At the age of 20, Respighi worked in St. Petersburg, Russia as a viola player for several months, at which time he took lessons with Rimsky-Korsakov. Respighi is said to have been affected by Tchaikovsky at this time as well. Some sources write that Respighi studied with Bruch at one point, but this is disputed by his wife, Elsa, who was fourteen years his junior and spent many dedicated years on his biography after his passing.[1] When Italy entered the war in 1915 (two years before he completed his violin sonata), Respighi was able to avoid joining the military due to his status as a professor. He travelled to more peaceful areas, away from the chaos.

Due to his strong interest in baroque music, he was a respected scholar on sixteenth to eighteenth century Italian composers such as Corelli, Monteverdi, and Vivaldi. He generally tried to stay away from classical influences in his works and often turned to baroque forms and incorporated these traditions into typical late nineteenth century romantic textures and harmonies. Other interests included Gregorian chant. Before World War I, he gained ideas from contemporary French music and took some excursions into the exotic. He also explored traditional Italian operatic styles as well as Strauss' music (*Salomé*, for example). After moving to Rome in 1913 many of his works reflected those of Franck. In Fountains of Rome, which was premiered in the same year as the Violin Sonata was completed, one can hear Ravel and Strauss,

[1] Elsa Respighi, *Ottorino Respighi* (Ricordi, 1962), 25.

particularly *Rosenkavalier*. As for his Violin Sonata, it is apparent that there are strong influences from baroque, French, and Italian operatic music.[2]

ANTONIO BERTALI: Ciaccona in C major

The Chaconne in C major (c. 1662) is considered the most popular piece written by Antonio Bertali. As typical to a chaconne, the bass is repeated throughout the entire work, and the musicians improvise variations around it. The violin part is mostly written out, but the continuo part is written as a simple line with figured bass which the players often improvise upon.

The chaconne form is very similar to that of the passacaglia—both originate from a dance from Spain and are typically of continuous variation in triple meter. Musicians and scholars have difficulties in defining the difference between the chaconne and passacaglia.[3] One common viewpoint is that the chaconne consists of a series of variations over a repeated ground bass, and in the passacaglia the ground bass can appear in any voice.

The last movement of Respighi's Violin Sonata is entitled "Passacaglia" so this program includes an example of such a dance form (in this case a chaconne) from the Italian baroque era which, as mentioned above, Respighi was very intrigued by.

NICCOLÒ PAGANINI: Cantabile

Paganini was one of the most celebrated violin virtuosi of his time. Famous for his 24 Caprices for Solo Violin, his music became an important pillar of modern violin technique. The score of his Cantabile was found among heaps of unpublished manuscripts after his death. It was apparently the only composition found that was written specifically for violin and piano, and was

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[2] John C.G. Waterhouse, rev. Janet Waterhouse and Potito Pedarra, "Respighi, Ottorino," Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed April 17, 2020, https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.47335

[3] "Passacaglia, Musical Form and Dance," Encyclopaedia Britannica, accessed April 17, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/art/passacaglia-musical-form-and-dance

presented at a special occasion.[4] The melody is highly reminiscent of the music from the bel canto period, by composers such as Bellini.

This style of typical Italian operatic music undoubtedly influenced Respighi, although it is known that he attempted to shun such stereotypes in his own music.

JOHANNES BRAHMS: Sonatensatz ("Scherzo" from the F.A.E Sonata)

The F.A.E Sonata (1853) was dedicated to another violin giant of the nineteenth century: Joseph Joachim. It was composed shortly after Brahms had befriended Joachim through Schumann. Schumann decided that he and his students, Brahms and Dietrich, would compose and present this sonata as a surprise gift to Joachim. The sonata consists of four movements, the first is Dietrich's, the third Brahms', and the second and fourth movements Schumann's. Joachim performed each movement with Clara at the piano at a soirée at the Schumanns', and he successfully guessed the composer of each movement without fail.[5] F.A.E. stands for "*Frei aber Einsam*" or "Free but lonely" and was a motto that Joachim used for himself as it embodied a very typical expression of the Romantic period. Brahms took up a similar motto, F.A.F. ("*Frei aber Froh,"* or "Free but happy"), in his third symphony.

This program includes a short piece by Brahms since Respighi apparently based the last movement of his Violin Sonata on Brahms' Fourth Symphony last movement, which is also a passacaglia.[6]

CLAUDE DEBUSSY: Violin Sonata

Debussy's last major composition was his Violin Sonata, which was written in the same year as Respighi's Violin Sonata (1917). This work was part of Debussy's project to create a set of Six Sonatas for various instruments. In 1915 he composed the first two sonatas, which were the Cello Sonata and Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp. His plan was to combine various

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[4] "Niccolò Paganini: Cantabile," Universal Edition, accessed April 17, 2020, https://www.universaledition.com/cantabile-for-violin-and-piano-paganini-niccolo-ue7014

[5] Malcolm MacDonald, *Brahms* (London: JM Dent, 1990), 17.

[6] Elizabeth E. Torres, "Back to the Future: Ottorini Respighi," accessed April 17, 2020, https://www.anne-sophie-mutter.de/en/page/projekte/back-to-the-future/ottorini-respighi/

sonorities in his later pieces and include wind and brass instruments and harpsichord, but due to his death in 1918 he was not able to complete the last three sonatas. Debussy premiered the Violin Sonata in 1917 with violinist Gaston Poulet.

Respighi, the Italian impressionist, had most likely not heard Debussy's Violin Sonata at the time he composed his own violin sonata, but since Debussy is considered the father of impressionism (although he rejected this term), his music undoubtedly influenced Respighi.

OTTORINO RESPIGHI: Violin Sonata

1917 was an important year for Respighi—he had just composed the first of his three tone poems, Fountains of Rome, which brought him to fame. The Violin Sonata was composed in the same year following Fountains, and was Respighi's first major chamber work after his unpublished string quartet in 1909. Some consider the sonata "Brahmsian" in nature with hints of Strauss and Franck, as well as impressionism.[7] [8] The first two movements explore beautiful harmonies under soaring and meandering melodies. In contrast, the last movement (Passacaglia) relies heavily on structure and form, with bold rhythms reflecting the rage of the first world war. The sonata was premiered in 1918 in Bologna with Respighi on the piano and his former violin teacher, Sarti, on the violin.

[7] Torres, *Back to the Future.*

[8] "ArkivMusic: Notes and Editorial Reviews, Respighi Violin Sonata," accessed April 17, 2020, http://www.arkivmusic.com/classical/album.jsp?album_id=804147

Second Dissertation Recital
French, Cyclic, Transformation
Christine Harada Li, Violin

Nathaniel Pierce, Baroque Cello
John Etsell & Ji-Hyang Gwak, Piano
Joseph Gascho, Harpsichord

Friday, January 24, 2020
Walgreen Drama Center, Stamps Auditorium
8:00 PM

Violin Sonata in D Major (1677) — Georg Muffat (1653–1704)
Adagio—Allegro—Adagio—Allegro—Adagio
Nathaniel Pierce, baroque cello
Joseph Gascho, harpsichord

Violin Sonata no. 1 in D Minor (1885) — Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)
Allegro agitato—Adagio
Allegro moderato—Allegro molto
Ji-Hyang Gwak, piano

Intermission

Thème et variations (1932) — Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992)
Thème – Modéré
Modéré
Un peu moins Modéré
Modéré, avec éclat
Vif et passionné
Tres modéré
John Etsell, piano

Violin Sonata no. 2 (1927) — Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)
Allegretto
Blues: Moderato
Perpetuum mobile: Allegro
John Etsell, piano

Program Notes
French, Cyclic, Transformation

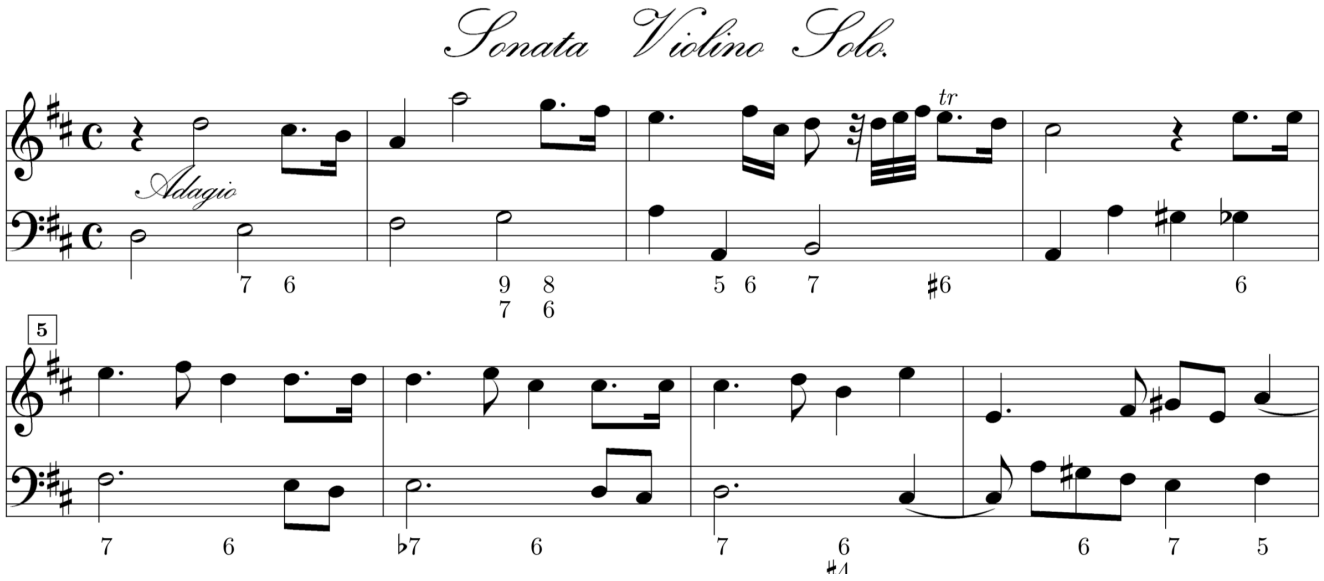
This program features four contrasting works by French composers of different eras. Each piece embodies a type of cyclic form, where one or more pieces of thematic material returns towards the end of a work. Cyclic form became especially popular in the 19th century after Franck and Liszt, and was popular among opera composers as well. Many violinists recognize the Franck Violin Sonata as a distinct example of a work in cyclic form. The composers of the Romantic era began experimenting with this form to feel more cohesion between all movements and to see the effects of thematic transformation (also known as thematic metamorphosis). Early use of cyclic form was apparent in the 17th century and classical composers such as Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven used cyclic ideas, although it was quite rare. Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* and his Piano Sonata in A major, Op. 101, Schubert's Piano Trio in E-flat and Fantasie for Violin and Piano, and Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* were all works which inspired Mendelssohn, Schumann, Liszt and Franck to use cyclic principles as an important part of their works. They experimented with changing the rhythm, melodic detail, orchestration, and dynamics of a theme, mainly to create a different outcome and expression, or for programmatic reasons. Thematic transformation takes certain aspects from the principles of variation—the technique is quite the same, but the outcome and effect are different.

The Muffat Violin Sonata, Saint-Saëns Violin Sonata, Messiaen Theme and Variations and Ravel Violin Sonata all utilize a type of cyclic form, but each one's treatment is unique. Transformation refers to the process and outcome in which the thematic material is modified and experienced in a new context. The reappearance of a theme may provoke an entirely new reaction than when it was first heard in the beginning. It differs slightly from the feeling of "arriving home" at the recapitulation in a classical sonata form. Some feelings that may arise might be nostalgia, transcendence, deeper appreciation, excitement, or a moment of sudden revelation. Below are a few examples in which each work has one or more significant moments of thematic reappearances and transformation.

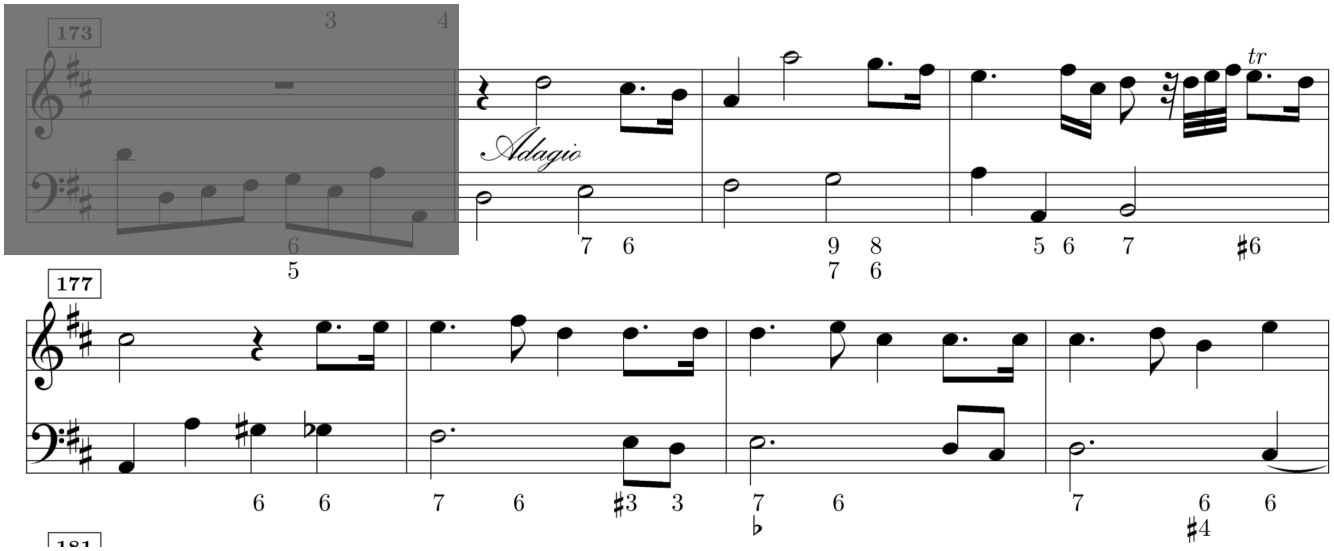
GEORG MUFFAT: Violin Sonata in D major (1677)

Georg Muffat was a Baroque composer and organist who was born in Megève, Duchy of Savoy (which is now in France). He studied in Paris in his early teen years, where it is said he worked with Jean Baptiste Lully or was at least largely influenced by him. After Paris, Muffat traveled to various cities in Europe. He was in Prague in 1677 when he composed his one and only violin sonata. This work is a seamless, multi-movement composition. It opens with a beautiful theme in D major (Example 1) which returns at the end of the Sonata. After the music explores various sections of contrasting characters and expressions, the reappearance of the theme in measure 174 (Example 2) evokes a changed sentiment than that of the opening, although the repetition is an exact transcription of the opening theme.

Example 1: Muffat Violin Sonata, measures 1–8



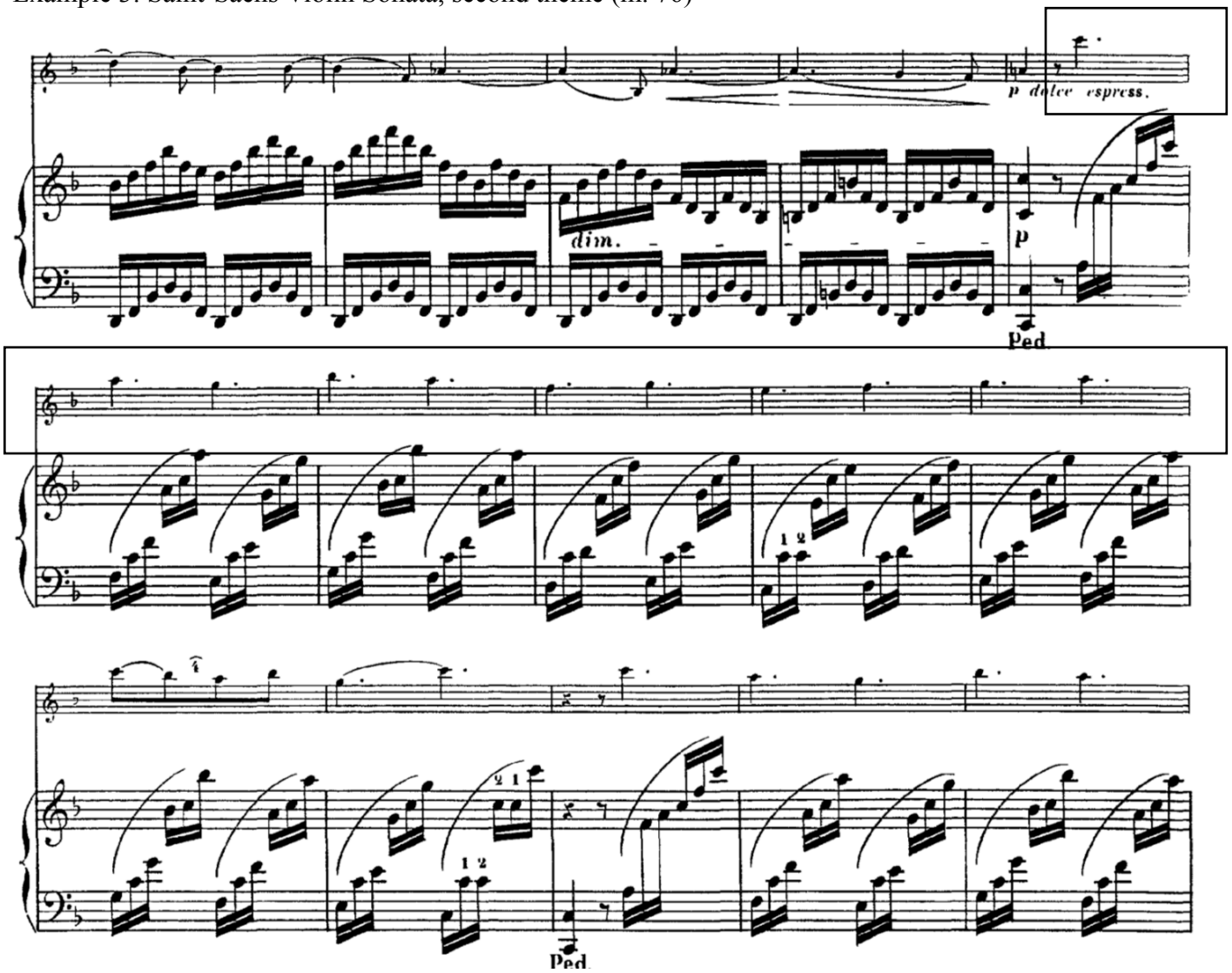
Example 2: Muffat Violin Sonata, measures 173–180



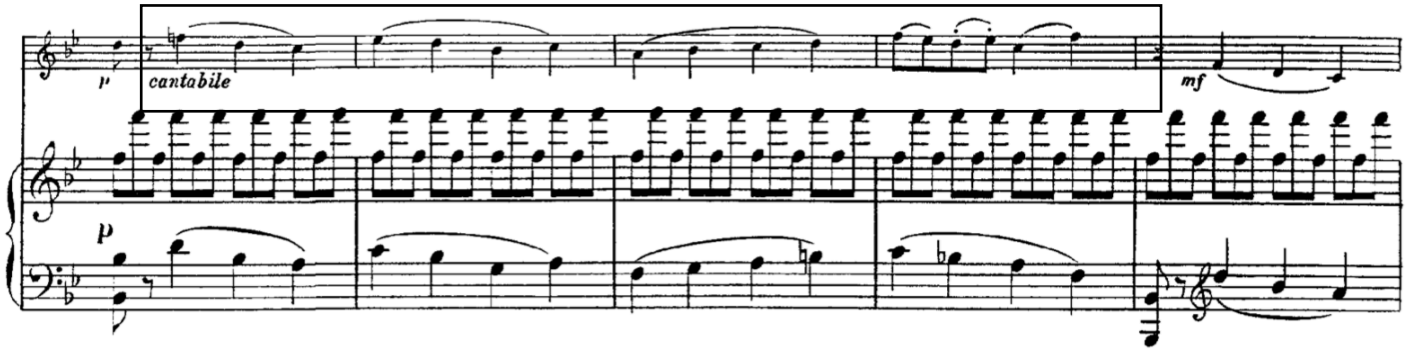
CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS: Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano (1885)

Saint-Saëns' first violin sonata was written around the time of his most characteristic compositions, such as the 'Organ' Symphony, Samson et Dalila, Carnival of the Animals, Violin Concerto No. 3, and Piano Concerto No. 4. Typical features of these works are repeated rhythmic motifs, choral melodies and four movements grouped into two large movements (as in his violin sonata). This violin sonata was dedicated to Martin Marsick of the Marsick Quartet. The violinists who attempted the sonata in its early stages proclaimed it too difficult to play, which prompted Saint-Saëns to call it his "Hippogriff" Sonata, implying that only magical creatures could play it. He wanted the work to create a brilliant effect like Beethoven's "Kreutzer" Sonata, especially in the finale. The finale brings back several transformed versions of the *dolce espressivo* choral second theme (m. 76) from the first movement (Example 3). The theme reappears in the last movement in measure 416, slightly altered in its key, articulation, character marking and meter (Example 4). The choral theme makes its final statement in a bombastic, triumphant manner in D major in measure 472 (Example 5) towards the end of the last movement, book-ending and tying the piece together.

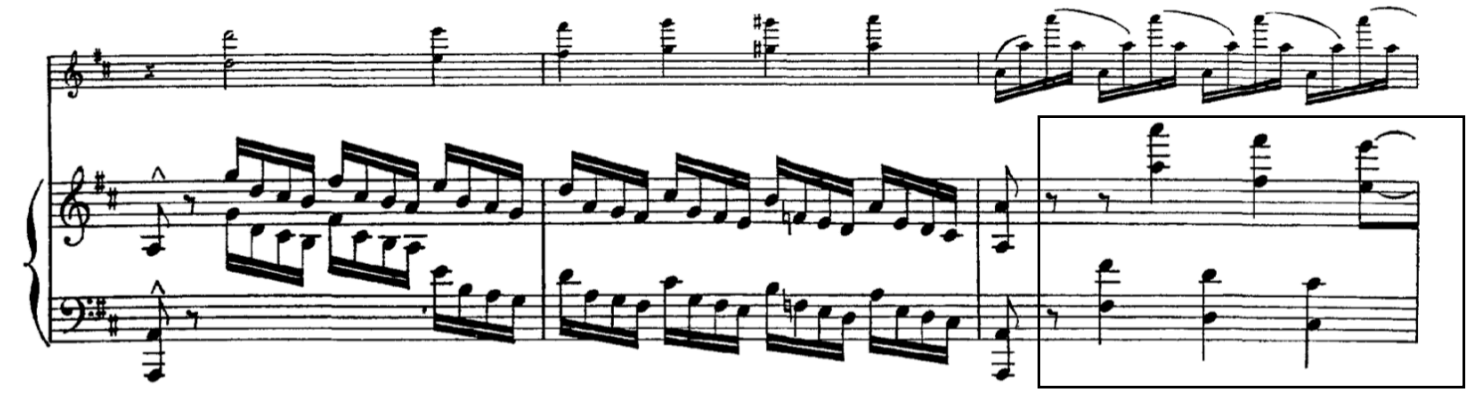
Example 3: Saint-Saëns Violin Sonata, second theme (m. 76)



Example 4: Saint-Saëns Violin Sonata, reappearance of second theme (m. 416)



Example 5: Saint-Saëns Violin Sonata, final statement of second theme (m. 472)



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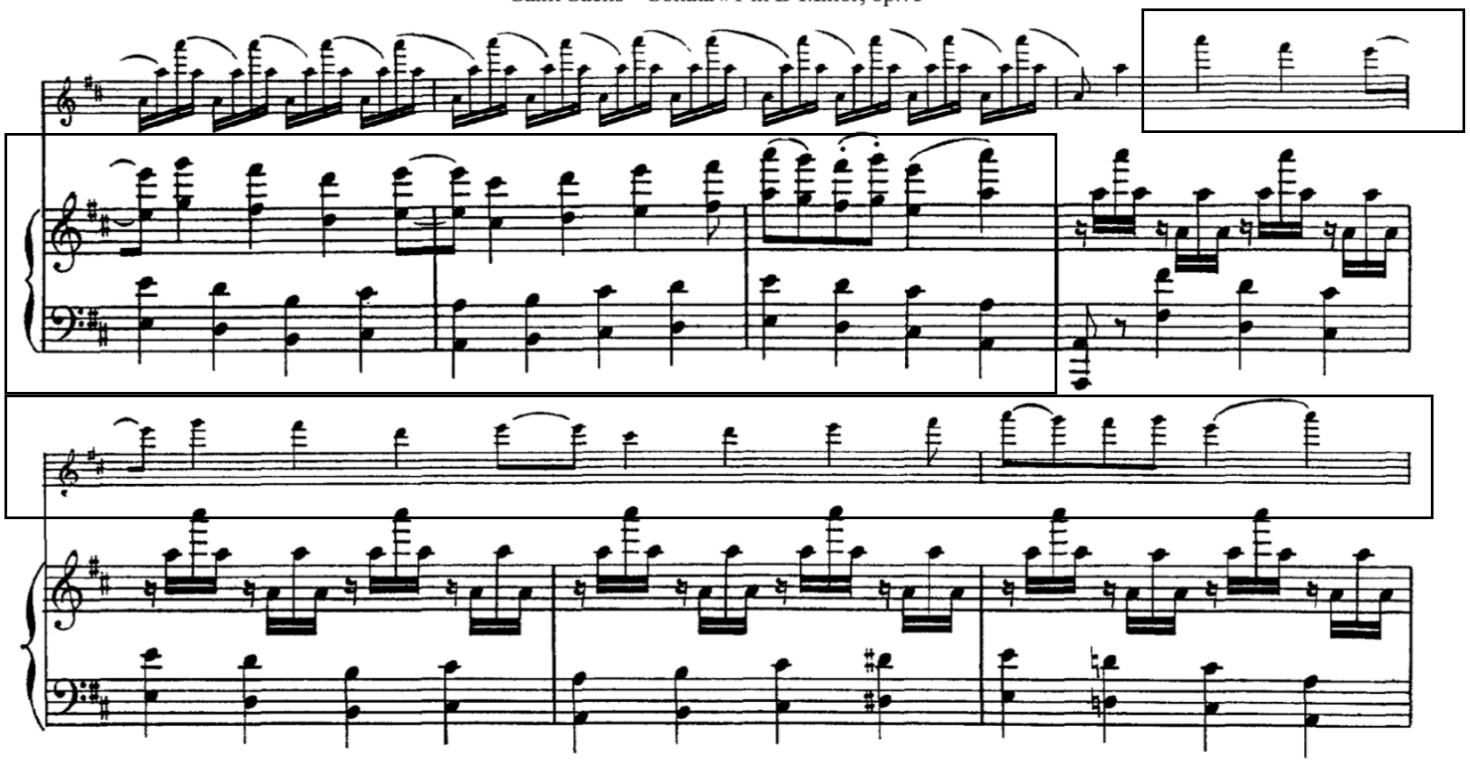


OLIVIER MESSIAEN: Theme and Variations (1932)

This work was originally composed as a wedding gift for Messiaen's first wife. The young couple performed it together the year they got married in 1932. As evident in the title, this piece is comprised of a theme and a number of variations:

Thème – Modéré

Variation Number 1 – Modéré

Variation Number 2 – Un peu moins Modére

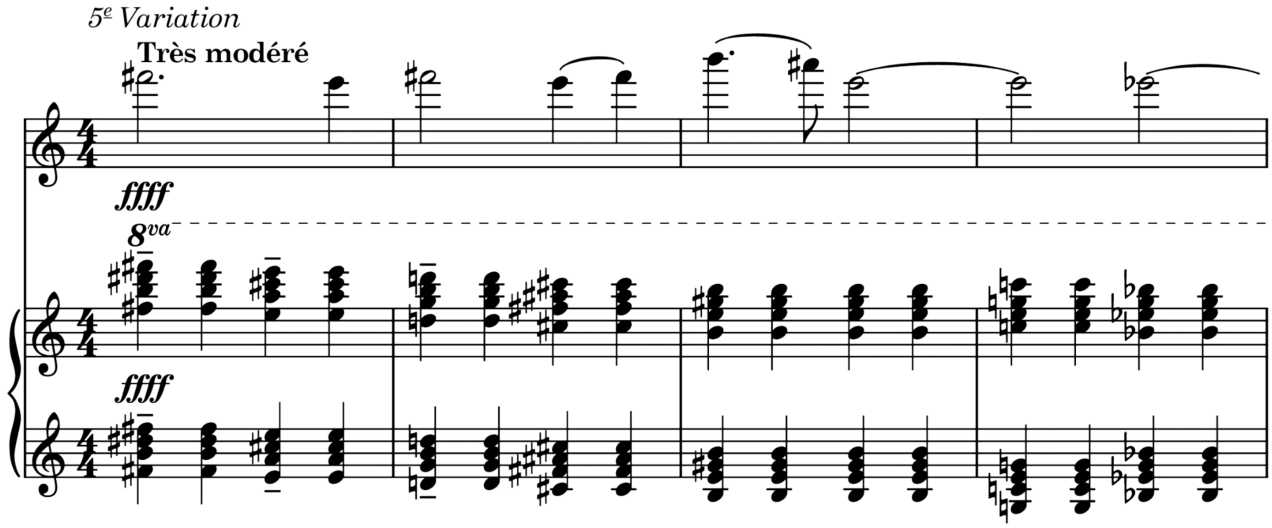
Variation Number 3 – Modéré, avec éclat

Variation Number 4 – Vif et passionné

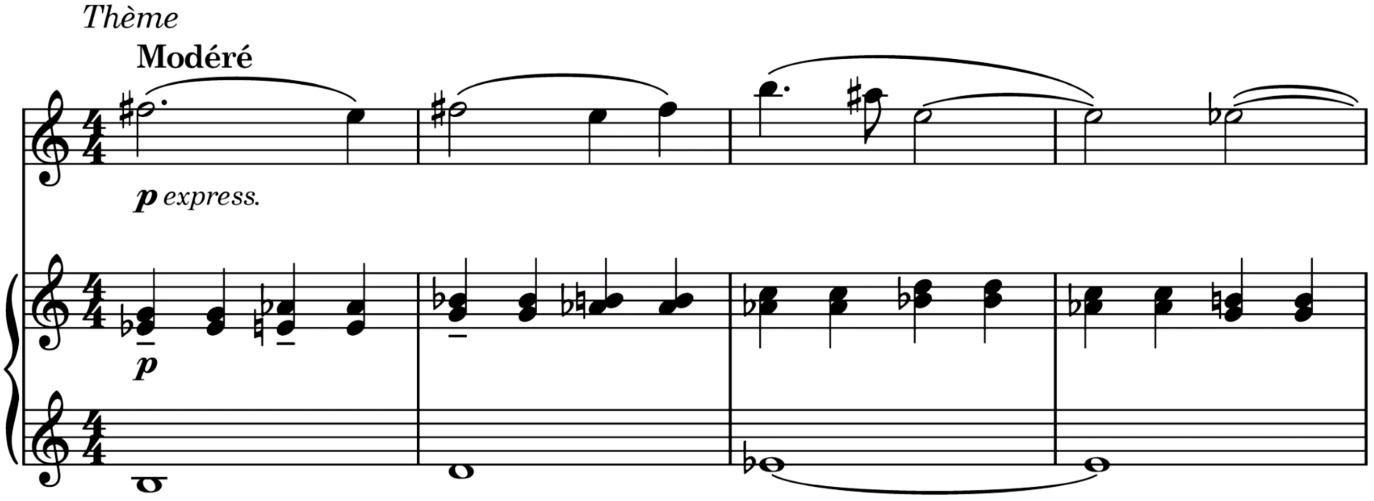
Variation Number 5 – Tres modéré

One could argue that this piece is not cyclic because it is constructed in a theme and variations form. What makes the work have a cyclic effect, however, is the manifestation of the original theme in the last variation (Example 6). Here, the melody and accompanying rhythm are the same but slightly modified—the melody is an octave above, the piano part has at least twice as many notes in its chords and the dynamic is *ffff* as opposed to *p express.* of the opening (Example 7). It is apparent that all of the other variations are related to the theme. The last variation, however, is the original theme transformed and possesses a transcendental character and expression, which creates an overall cyclic impression on the listener. Hugh Macdonald writes in the Grove Dictionary, "...the transformed theme has a life and independence of its own and is no longer a sibling of the original theme."

Example 6: Messiaen Theme and Variations, fifth variation



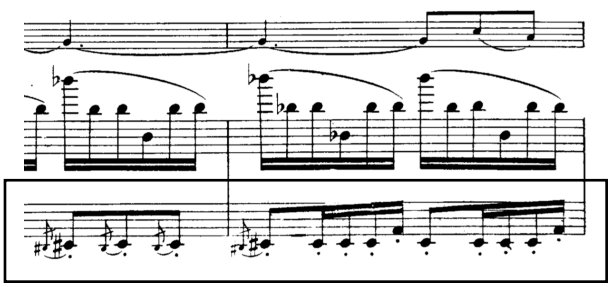
Example 7: Messiaen Theme and Variations, opening theme



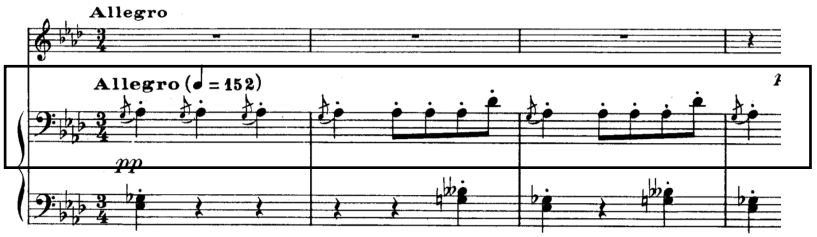
MAURICE RAVEL: Sonata for Violin and Piano (1927)

Ravel was known to be an avid perfectionist and spent at least four years working on his violin sonata. He completed his opera *L'enfant et les sortilèges* at around the same time and the sonata's first movement is reminiscent of the different characters and moods from the opera. The second movement contrasts with the first and was clearly inspired by the influence of American jazz and blues in Paris at the time. The last movement is a relentless stream of sixteenth notes and reflects the era's development of machinery and automatons. Ravel experienced his father's factory at a young age and most likely developed a liking for intricate machines. Although each movement drastically differs from the other, they are all bound together by themes introduced in the first and second movements. These themes reappear multiple times in the last movement underneath the violin's busy sixteenth notes. For example, the last movement begins with a motive that was introduced in the first movement (Example 8):

Example 8:



First movement motive

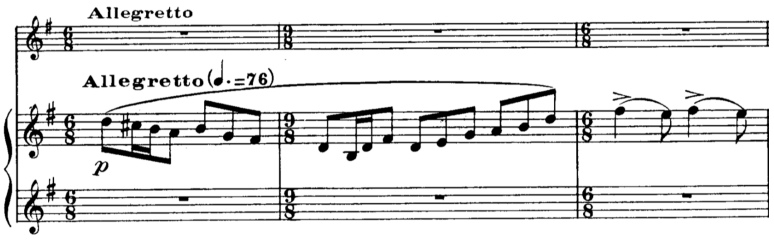


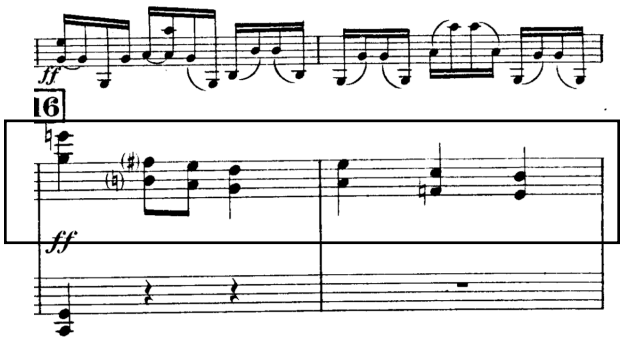
First mov motive in a different meter in the last movement

Jazzy rhythms from the second movement appear in the piano part at various moments as well. In the climax of the end, the opening melody of the first movement appears in *ff* parallel fifths (Example 9):

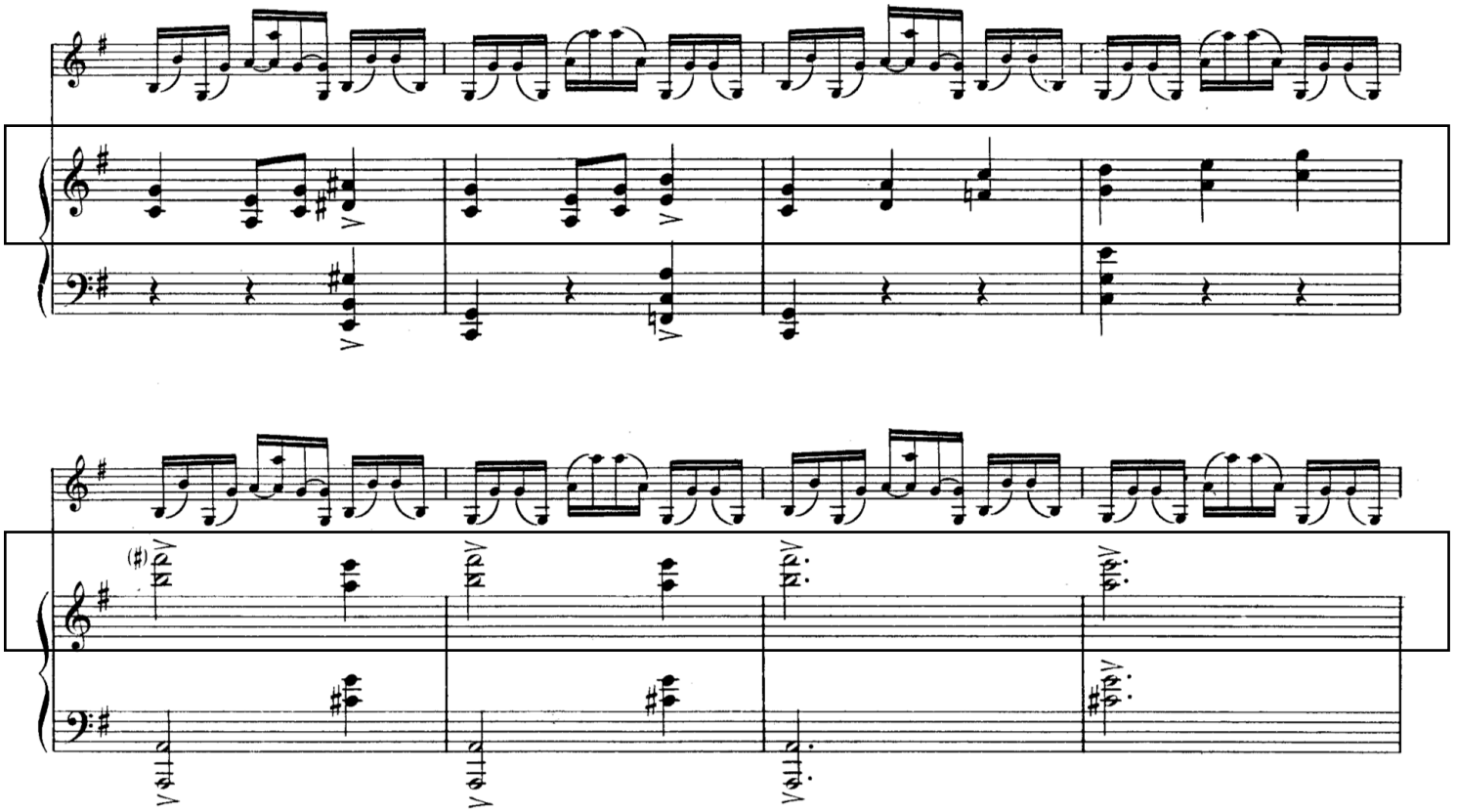
Example 9:

First theme from movement one:





First theme's Transformation in the last movement:



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Third Dissertation Recital
Britten Violin Concerto

Christine Harada Li, Violin

Kenneth Kiesler, Conductor
University Symphony Orchestra

September 22, 2018
Hill Auditorium
8:00 PM

Violin Concerto, Op. 15 — Benjamin Britten (1913–1976)

Moderato con moto – Agitato – Tempo primo –
Vivace – Animando – Largamente – Cadenza –
Passacaglia: Andante lento (Un poco meno mosso)

Program Notes
Benjamin Britten Violin Concerto

Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) is one of the most important English composers of the twentieth century. He is remembered for his revival of English opera, most notably *Peter Grimes*, which was written a few years after his Violin Concerto. He branched away from the trend of the postwar avant-garde and developed his own tonal language. His music was often inspired by his own personal struggles and devoted pacifist beliefs.

During his youth Britten admired composers of the past such as Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms. He was heavily influenced by Frank Bridge with whom he studied for some time in London. In early 1939 Britten ventured to America with his friends. He had multiple reasons to leave his home country—the effects of fascism spreading throughout Europe and the desire to escape from the harsh reviews of his music in the press (Britten was apparently quite thin-skinned). A window for new opportunities intrigued Britten to cross the ocean, first to Canada and then to the United States.[9]

Britten's compositions during his American years are said to reflect his personal and emotional turmoils (having to do with his homosexuality, affection for young boys, and his strong stance against war and violence). Peter Pears—a tenor who accompanied Britten to America—was Britten's roommate, romantic and musical partner, and they remained together for the rest of their lives. Britten wrote the Violin Concerto "against the backdrop of looming war and blossoming romance."[10] The first version was completed in the summer and autumn of 1939 when Britain declared war against Germany. The music conveys the feelings of war, melancholy and nostalgia and highly contrasts with his exuberant piano concerto which was only written a year earlier.

The concerto was first premiered with Spanish violinist Antonio Brosa performing with the New York Philharmonic. In an interview Brosa alluded to the Spanish flavor in the work and

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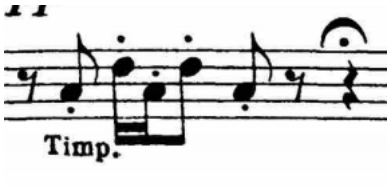
[9] Jennifer Doctor, Judith LeGrove, Paul Banks, Heather Wiebe and Philip Brett, "Britten, (Edward) Benjamin," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, accessed April 16, 2020, https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.46435

[10] "A Tale of Love & War: Britten's Violin Concerto," Houston Symphony, accessed April 16, 2020, https://houstonsymphony.org/britten-violin-concerto/

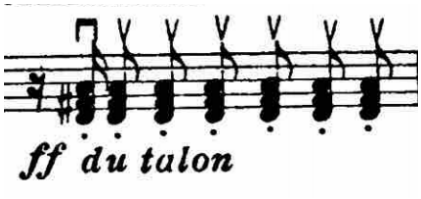
the sentiments that reflected recent battles of the Spanish Civil War. For example, the opening rhythm (Example 10) in the timpani which is elaborated in the violin cadenza of the second movement is reminiscent of Spanish rhythms (castanet rhythms, flamenco-like guitar

Example 10:



sonorities)[11] and the military drum-like eighth notes that appear initially in the first movement appears repeatedly throughout the work (Example 11).

Example 11:



Brosa was highly involved in Britten's process of composing the concerto. Britten wrote in a letter to Ralph Hawkes, "I have written to him, asking him to be honest and tell me what passages are ineffective and what alterations he suggests. Also I am hoping that he will finger and bow the part for the edition."[12] Britten later revised the concerto and removed many virtuosic and technically challenging passages which Brosa had recommended.[13] In total the concerto was revised twice. On the other hand, Brosa did help Britten bring forth many of his desired musical effects. For example, in the first movement of the concerto, it is marked that the violinist should play an arpeggiated passage entirely on the G string, when he or she could easily play it across the G, D, and A strings (Example 12). This creates a more vocal effect and a sense of struggle for the violinist.

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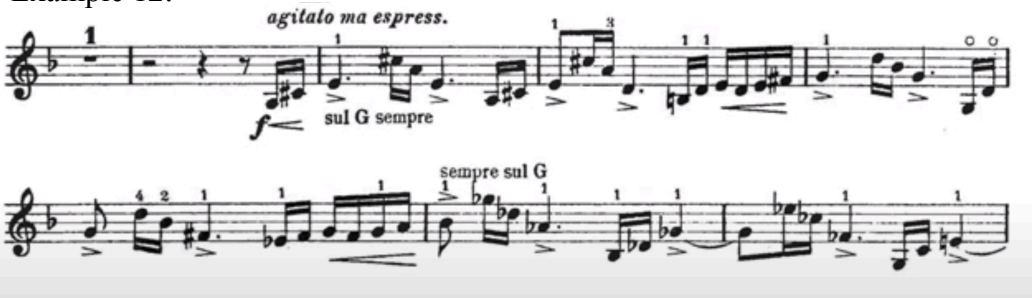
[11] Eric Roseberry, "The Purcell Realizations," in The Britten Companion, Christopher Palmer (ed.), (New York: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1984), p. 356.

[12] Donald Mitchell and Philip Reed, Letters from a Life: The Selected Letter and Diaries of Benjamin Britten, 1913-1939, vol. 1, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), vol. 2, 735.

[13] Shr-Han Wu, "An Analytical Study of the Britten Violin Concerto, Op. 15," (DMA diss., University of South Carolina, 2017), 20.

Example 12:



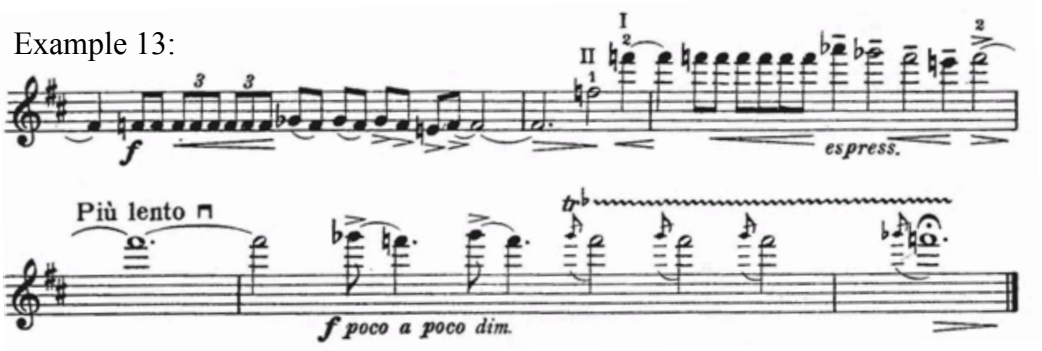
Britten's Violin Concerto is in the standard three movement layout, but structured in an unconventional form, similarly to Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 1 and Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No. 1. The second movement ends with a cadenza and seamlessly continues into the third movement, which is a *passacaglia.* Britten was highly fond of Baroque music—particularly Purcell—so it is not unusual that he would have incorporated this popular Baroque form. As mentioned earlier when referring to Respighi's *passacaglia,* the *passacaglia* originated in Spain in the seventeenth century and is similar to the chaconne.

The last movement strays away from the images of battle and the music conveys drama and emotions which most likely influenced Britten's writing in *Peter Grimes,* especially in one of the orchestral interludes which is also a *passacaglia*.[14]

The violin part that oscillates between F and G-flat (or F-sharp enharmonically) leaves the listener feeling unsettled between D major and D minor. This play in tonality which expresses ambiguity and uncertainty is prevalent in many of Britten's works (Example 13).

Britten himself was extremely fond of his Violin Concerto. He wrote to his publisher: "So far it is without question my best pieces. It is rather serious, I'm afraid—but it's got some tunes in it!"[15]

Example 13:



[14] Wu, "Britten Violin Concerto," 46–47

[15] "Tale of Love & War."

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